COUNT JOSEPH DE MAISTRE;

HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS:

A LECTURE

BY

THE REV. W. FITZGERALD,

VICE-PRESIDENT,

ST. COLMAN'S COLLEGE, FERMOY,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE CORK YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY,

November 10*th* 1870.

"A vivid and masterly lecture."—*Cork Examiner.*

"The lecture was complete in every particular—it exhausted the subject.

The crushing logic, scorching sarcasm, and subduing wit of Joseph de Maistre were all splendidly traced."—*Cork Herald.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

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What is known of COUNT JOSEPH DE MAISTRE? truly, very little in our country, and hence the publication of the following lecture. By a strange arrangement the greatest French Catholic writer of our century is comparatively unknown, whilst every one is acquainted, to a greater or lesser extent, with the host of hostile writers whom it was Joseph de Maistre's mission to answer and confound. He who threw such light on the nature, causes and results of the chastening ordeal through which France was forced to pass between the convocation of the States-General in 1789, and the Congress of Vienna, ought, indeed, to be worth consulting at a time, when the same gallant and Catholic nation is again subjected to disappointment, defeat and humiliation. It is, then, to gratify no mere whim, to satisfy no idle purpose, that the author has, with the approval of a few sincere and discriminating friends, consented to the publication of his lecture on the "Life and Writings" of Count Joseph de Maistre:—whilst the Lecture has many defects (of which no one is more conscious than the author himself) it has, at all events, this much to recommend it to the indulgence of its readers;—in the first place, whatever is told is told frankly and in good faith, and secondly it is written by one whose time is constantly occupied with sufficiently important duties, and who, in consequence, was not able to give to its matter, style and arrangement all the consideration and care, which he himself would wish, and which a too exacting criticism may be disposed to look for,

WM. FITZGERALD,

St Colman's College,
Nov. 17, 1870.

LECTURE.

COUNT JOSEPH DE MAISTRE.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

It is no small privilege to be allowed to address the members of a Society, so useful, so learned, and so influential as that before which I have the honor of appearing this evening. I would rejoice exceedingly at being permitted to add my labours to those of others in furtherance of the great cause for which your Association was founded, did not I feel satisfied that in your selection of Lecturer, you have not been as successful on the present, as you were well known to have been on former occasions. Any demand, however, made in your favour by the high-minded gentleman and accomplished scholar who has so long, and so wisely conducted your Society is, to my mind, one that would not be sufficiently respected as long as it remained un-complied with. J. G. McCarthy, because of long and distinguished services to the Catholic cause deserves too well of every one that knows him, not to make any *request* of his, that affects the interests of the Cork Young Men's Society, in meaning and in effectiveness equal to a *command.* Hence it was, that though at first unwilling, I finally consented to appear before you this evening in the capacity of lecturer and to submit to you, with the permission of your respected and learned President, what I know of J. de Maistre, as fully, as frankly, and as interestingly as I can.

Much about the time that the army of Dumouriez was left at liberty, by the retreat of the Allies under the Duke of Brunswick, to invade the low countries, and win for revolutionary France the famous battle of Jemappes, another republican army was on the point of entering Savoy, which was soon claimed and conquered by the French from Chambéry to Mont Cenis. The consequence of this invasion was the flight of many respectable families, and the confiscation of their property—amongst others there left Chambéry for Lausanne, in this memorable year of 1792, a married man of 38 years of age, one whose father was President of the Senate, and who himself, though a Savoyard, loved best after the Church, not Savoy, but France. "Nothing great," he wrote at one time to a friend, "takes place in Europe without the French;—they have been absurd, mad, atrocious &c. &c as much as you please, but, they nevertheless have been chosen as the instruments of a great revolution, and I have no doubt, but, that one day, they will abundantly repay the world for all the mischief they have caused." Like all great men Joseph de Maistre has had friends and enemies, indeed his readers must of necessity range themselves in one category or the other, and to give the distinguished writer himself his due, he was clearly not unwilling to make mankind consist of only the two parties. From his boyhood he had a singular predilection for, will we say, "choosing his side," and once he placed himself on this side, or on that, he held his own with marvellous boldness and all but unanswerable logic. To give an instance of the consistent tenacity of the great subject of this evenings's lecture, I may tell you that from his infancy he was singularly fond of the Jesuits, and when during his stay in St. Petersburg, he read something that sought to damage that distinguished body, he replied, as follows, to the Parisian friend who sent him the book containing the objectionable passages, "To conclude, my dear friend, there is nothing I value so highly as

family feeling—my grand father loved the Jesuits, my father loved them, my sublime mother loved them, my son loves them. and his son shall (please God) love them, if only the King gives him leave to have a son." It is no wonder that such a man would be loved and hated; loved as the honest and fearless believer, the unshrinking and matchless defender of what he believed, the loyal subject, at a time when a premium was set on disloyalty, the devoted husband and father, the elegant scholar and fine christian gentleman, and hated by all who cannot realize to themselves the triumphs of grace and of Faith, who disbelieve in virtue, who think Lord Bacon infallible, who hate the Church, and would persecute the Jesuits. Up to the time of his leaving Savoy for Switzerland, M. de Maistre lived in comparative retirement at Chambéry, content with discharging in peace and honor the agreeable duties of an aristocratic pater-familias—he was not, however, forgetful of literature, its claims and its beauties—in his letters and *opuscules* written at this period, and afterwards edited by his son, Rodolph, we find numberless passages which bespeak an intimate knowledge with, what we may call, the *delicacies* of the French language, and find in a state already more than half developed that peculiarly skilful use of the humorous in argument, with which J. de Maistre was in after years accredited and which, when dealing with the would-be philosophers of his time, he turned to such singular account. Never, perhaps, has the plastic and graceful language of Racine and Fenelon been presented to the reader with greater clearness, greater animation, and more thrilling nervousness than by the brilliant but inflexible publicist of Chambéry. Much as he loved France and its people, he loved its language better still. "Do you know," he says, writing to the Father of the late venerable Archbishop of Lyons, "in my love of the French language, I do not yield even to yourself; laugh if you will, but it cannot enter into my head that a man can be as eloquent in any language

as in French." The sad state of affairs in Europe at the time of his arrival in Lausanne soon afforded Joseph de Maistre sufficient matter for deep and continued observation—truth and error were more vigorously than at any previous time combating for the mastery on the once sacred, but then seemingly accursed soil of France. It is very possible that if the frame-work of European society had not been, in his time, wholly disorganized, the scholarship of our great christian author would not have been known outside the old capital of Savoy. Whilst a few perishable materials will be enough for small minds, great ones require vast and lasting elements to warm them into energy and action. "Materia alitur" says Tacitus, talking of genius, "motibus excitatur, et urendo lucescit"—it is nourished by materials, excited by occasions and shines by burning." Whilst error has a thousand forms it may be said to have only two principal characters, and these are superstition and incredulity—either man seeks to accommodate the image of God, which is within him, to his own detestable passions, and this is *superstition*, or by a perversity still more lamentable he seeks to blot out the Divine likeness altogether, and this is *incredulity*. In the early ages of the world, there was only one people exempt from the first impiety, but it was reserved for after ages to witness the origin, progress and ravages of the second. Had not divine truth itself been pleased to come upon earth and in the language of one of the prophets "condescended to converse with men," the infamous doctrines of the school of Epicurus would have inevitably involved the Pagan subjects of Imperial Rome in, what we may call, an intellectual and social chaos. Under the hallowed and mysterious influence of the Gospel, society which was only a while ago threatened with dissolution, recovered life and energy, and the religious complexion of European civilization continued unchanged until the period, which in one sense, at all events, is not inaptly called the "renaissance."—In the rationalism of Marsilius

Ficinus and Gemisthus Pletho, in the saracenic mysticism of Picus of Mirandola, and, indeed, in that scarcely disguised patronage of sceptical philosophy for the which the voluptuous Medici had, by this time, got into disrepute, we behold evidences of a returning unbelief, which, in due course, sought to demolish one by one the various articles of the Christian faith, and reached its climax of impiety and destructiveness in the French Revolution. It was arranged by Providence, that things should be now as they were in the first ages of Christianity :— martyrs to the Truth were demanded, and they were found, apostles were wanting, and they were not slow in forthcoming. The very order, namely that of the noblesse, which contributed so much by its superciliousness and hostility to the people, and, perhaps, by its profligacy and extravagance, to bring about the Revolution was that order of all others, which supplied the guillotine with some of its most precious victims, and furnished to the Christian cause some of its ablest defenders.

The French nobility, after the commission of many errors and the rendering of a sufficiently large measure of expiation, gave to France and the world three remarkable men, whose mission was to re-establish the empire of Truth, to build up anew its altars which had so long lain in ruins, and to prove to an unbelieving and heartless generation that a superintending power did not cease to direct the destinies of mankind even amidst the desolation and miseries of the Revolution. These three men were Chateaubriand, the Vicomte de Bonald, but, above and incomparably beyond the other two, the illustrious Count Joseph de Maistre. The Religion of their fathers, the rights of their displaced line of kings, the legitimate freedom of all, such were the noble themes to which these extraordinary men consecrated their time, their thoughts and their genius. Of the two, de Bonald was much more like Joseph de Maistre than the brilliant, but sometimes erratic Chateaubriand.—De Bonald was

clear and solid, was dignified and christian, and in this he resembled de Maistre, but, he sadly wanted the playfulness, the point, the pungency and power of the great Savoyard. There is probably no writer, in any language, who has made metaphysical subjects so readable as did Joseph de Maistre, and this, because of the singular play of fancy and happiness of expression with which he clothed some of the most profound theories ever broached, concerning society and civil government. Wit which many dull people would, perhaps, refuse to accept of as an auxiliary, was, at all times, gladly availed of by our author, and the *philosophers* of his time can best tell with what amazingly good results. He thought that it was with controversy as with other games, that the man half wins who puts his antagonist out of temper—Cela les fera enrager lá bas, he would repeat to himself whenever he said something very hard, to the Voltarians, "that will set them mad *below there*," *below there*, of course, meaning Paris. And the learning of this extraordinary man was not limited to one department of science, but, may be said to have extended to all. Philosophy, Theology, Ethics, History, and political science were all laid under contribution by the vast intellect of the Chambéry lawyer. His first work of importance was the famous "Considerations sur la France," which immediately gave him a prominent place amongst the French writers of the period. Though the government of Directory prohibited the circulation of the work in France, it went through three editions in the course of the year; even in the opening sentences of this remarkable work, the reader finds an epitome of the system which it takes only ten chapters to expound—but, ten such chapters—they tell, no doubt, of the mightiest efforts of men in word and deed, and they tell, alas! equally of the impotence of those efforts. They are, at once, the *recueil* of human wisdom, and the proof of its insufficiency.—"Man proposes" says that proverb justly become so common, "but God disposes," Yes in

truth, man can only propose, for in the language of the sublime and orthodox de Maistre, "nous sommes tous attaches au trône de l'être supreme par une chaine souple qui nous retient sans nous asservir. Ce qu'il y a de plus admirable dans l'ordre universel des choses, c'est l'action des êtres libres sous la main divine. Librement esclaves, ils opérent tout-á-la fois volontairement et necessairement: ils font réellement ce qu' ils veulent, mais sans pouvoir déranger les plans généraux. Chacun de ces êtres occupe le centre d'une sphere d'activité dont le diamétre varie au gré de l'eternal géometre, qui sait étendre, restreindre, arrêter ou diriger la volonté, activité sans altérer la nature." There have been some, no doubt, who pretended to find in these remarkable words an approach to fatalism, and who regarded it as a somewhat curious and instructive fact, that a theory, which had been so often made a ground of reproach against the partisans of the Revolution, was, at a later period, professed by one of their most determined, and most formidable enemies. But, nothing was farther from Joseph de Maistre's mind, than to go in for fatalism under any form whatsoever.—He found, by a searching analysis of the historical events which came under his notice, that the relationship of cause and effect was so well sustained throughout as to give to the whole chain a kind of necessary succession; whilst the right and power of combination for political purposes will always remain to man, it is only to the creative power of God, that we are indebted for every result that is orderly and progressive. It is with nations, as with individuals, they cannot dispense with the divine supervision unless at the certain risk of great political convulsions, and perhaps of entire and speedy dismemberment—the power to build up is not a human power, for order must, of necessity, come from the source of all order;—That this principle true of all times, of all countries, of all forms of government is particularly true of the great French revolution, De Maistre shows with a conclusiveness

and an eloquenee worthy of tbe great Bosuet himself. The worst agents of the revolution were not so much agents as instruments, it was not they who brought about and encouraged the revolution, but it was rather the revolution that gave them influence and prominence. Robespierre, Collot d'Herbois and St. Just were only greatly to be feared because of a reign of terror—it was the period that made the men, and not the men who made the period. These very men who were by no means possessed of conspicuous abilities, exercised for a time over a nation that had sinned a despotism of the very worst kind, but there were no three men in the kingdom more surprised at their tyranny and blood-spilling than were the three revolutionary bravos themselves. For a time everything seemed to thrive with the enemies of christianity and order, they were constantly looking forward to even greater results in their favor than they could, a while ago, have anticipated, always forgetting that they were only the instruments of One wiser than themselves, and that their successes were no more their own, than was his own the musical triumph of Vaucanson's mechanical flute player who whether he (wished it or not) was never able to discourse false notes. Nations as individuals have their missions to discharge and as the mission of the French nation was to lead the christian civilization of Europe, it was no wonder that when France forgot her mission, God would recall her to a sense of her duty by forcing her to pass through a terrible and sanguinary ordeal. In a revolution, the innocent sometimes suffer equally with the guilty, but the innocent, according to Joseph de Maistre's notion, are much fewer than people ordinarily imagine. In one of his interviews with Clarke, Duke of Feltre, our own countryman Theobald Wolfe Tone was told that " on ne fait pas des omelettes sans casser des œufs," when the war Minister to the Directory was replying to some objections which the young and enthusiastic Irish patriot had heard more than once in Ireland, and which he quoted at the Luxembourg. "You cannot make omelets without

breaking eggs" said Clarke, and for this result Joseph de Maistre in almost every page of his "considerations" supplies us with more than sufficient reason. Probably in no language is there to be found finer writing than in some of the passages in which, with his inflexible logic, he works out the apparently singular theory "that the universe is filled with punishments the victims and inflictors of which are equally guilty." It is not only individuals who have been condemned to death, but against nations themselves the dread decree has gone forth and if it were permitted us to see fully into the designs of God, we would as easily comprehend why Heaven punished France, as why the Jacobins beheaded Madame Roland. In this, his first work of real importance, Joseph de Maistre plans out for himself a system to which he remained consistently faithful during a sufficiently long and eventful life—one may suppose from the theocratic complexion of his political philosophy that Joseph de Maistre was a friend to absolute government, but such was very far from being the case:—in a letter to his friend, Baron de Vignet, he writes, "The other point on which it appears to my regret that we cannot agree is about the revolution (of one kind or other) which seems to be inevitable in all States. You say that nations will require "strong governments." whereupon, I must enquire what you mean by that! If monarchy is strong in proportion as it is absolute, the governments of Naples, Lisbon and Madrid, must in your eyes, appear to be very vigorous. Yet you know, and everybody knows, that these monsters of weakness only exist, thanks to their equilibrium. Rest assured that to strengthen monarchy you must base it on the laws, and must avoid military tribunals, changes of office, and ministerial jobs and messes." In 1797, Joseph de Maistre left Switzerland for Turin, but did not remain there long—Charles Emmanuel IV. was about this time compelled to abandon his continental possessions, and found it convenient to withdraw to the island of Sardinia.

Joseph de Maistre did not follow immediately the fortunes of his banished Sovereign, but repaired, after a perilous journey from Piedmont, to Venice, whence the victories of the Russian general, Suwaroff, made his return to Turin a matter of no great difficulty. He was scarcely well back in the Piedmontese capital when he was called to the island of Sardinia, where he filled for a few years the office of "regent de la Chancellerie royale" His next appointment was that of Envoy extraordinary to the court of St. Petersburgh, and his arrival there was contemporaneous with the elevation to the moscovite throne of the most accomplished prince in Europe at that time, the Emperor Alexander I. Joseph de Maistre now obliged to reside at a distance from home and friends soon became a great favorite in the Russian capital: his vast erudition, his brilliant conversational powers, his supreme contempt for the "petitesse" that characterized most of the *doctrinaires* of his time, but, above all, his frank, manly and generous nature secured for him an entrée not only into the salons of the Russian noblesse, but caused the Czar himself to appreciate to the full extent the virtues and talents of the illustrious diplomatist. For the highly civilized and (shall I *build* the word) *courtier-born* de Maistre, residence near the Russian Court at that period must have had many and powerful attractions, but, tho' a gentleman and courtier by birth and training, Joseph de Maistre was still more a husband and father after the good old catholic model. To be separated for twelve years from that devoted and virtuous wife, to whom he plighted his faith and love in 1786, was in itself, a hard and heavy trial, but the Count de Maistre had too much reliance and hope in the providence of God not to receive every trial (and many of them came in his way) in the spirit of christian peace and resignation. During his stay in St. Petersburg, his wife and one of his daughters, resided between Lausanne and Chambéry—the second daughter Constance, whom her father only saw, when she was twenty

years of age, resided entirely at Chambéry under the safe guardianship of a venerable and religious relative. The young Rodolph, who followed his distinguished father to St. Petersburg, soon after his arrival in Russia was appointed to a commission in the Imperial Guard. With Joseph de Maistre's singularly orthodox notions regarding the religious and civil government of the world, with his strong catholic instincts, and his peculiarly domestic habits, this relegation to the banks of the Néva, in the midst of an European chaos, would never have been sufficiently compensated for, not even by the sword and cocked hat of an ambassador, were it not that he believed fully, firmly and freely in the re-establishment of faith, loyalty and order throughout the length and breadth of the country which he loved so well even in the midst of her aberrations. Tho' often pressed to share in the court hospitalities, which Alexander dealt out at this period with such truly imperial magnificence, he would appear to have preferred the unobtrusive and thoughtful life of the student and philosopher,—"if perchance" he says, writing to a lady friend in 1805, "you have a fancy to know what I am doing, and how I am living, I can easily answer :- my life just now is very much like something you know—the motion of a clock—tic-tac.—Yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, and always, I can with difficulty drag myself out, and I often refuse dinners to indulge in the great pleasure of staying at home. I read, I write, I learn, for after all one must know something. When 9 o'clock comes I may permit myself now and then to be dragged to a friend's house, you may not be of opinion that I am right, but, never mind, tastes differ. At all events I try before the day is over to resume that native cheerfulness which has sustained me up to this; I blow upon the flames, just as an old woman tries to light her lamp by the embers of yesterdays fire. I strive to forget that terrible revolution, the vision of broken heads and arms which are constantly haunting me; I then sup like a young

man, I sleep like a child, and wake like a grown man, the meaning of which is I get up very early; and then I begin over again, always turning in the same circle, and invariably placing my foot in the same place, much as a donkey does in a mill, and with this sublime comparison, allow me to conclude, Madame, with the assurance of my very highest consideration." In a letter to his brother the Chevalier de Maistre, the inimitable Count Joseph again gives vent to his inexhaustible humour—"Why my dear Brother, the truth is I have got over another winter here, and this, if you please, without a fur pelisse, which is very much the same thing as to have no shirt, at all at Cagliari. As the attendance of a single servant is considered impossible here on account of the climate and the work, in order to have a second, I have made the acquaintance of a thief, who was on the point of falling into the hands of justice; and I have proposed to him to become a honest man under the shadow of my diplomatic protection. For the last few months I have managed to get on pretty well:—the hotel-keeper, who used to poison me having left, I am now obliged to go in for what would be to your mind, perhaps, a very singular torment,—that of sharing my servants mess. There is no doubt, a great deal of hospitality in this country, but the foreigner never reaches the Russian's heart. For my part I never yet found myself in full dress in the midst of this Asiatic pomp that I did not think with regret of my gray stockings at Lausanne" !. Joseph de Maistre was like all good men, fond of his friends, even to friendship, in her "slippers," as he himself once expressed it he was fond of talking about old times, old recollections, and old regrets. And what good or great man has ever been otherwise! He regarded with a kind of religious regard:—

Friendship, peculiar boon of Heaven,
The noble mind's delight and pride
To man and angels only given,
To all the lower world denied.

Thy gentle flows of guiltless joys
On fools and villians ne'er descend:
In vain for thee the tyrant sighs
And hugs a flatterer for a friend.

Directress of the brave and just
O guide us through life's darksome way!
And let the tortures of mistrust
On selfish bosoms only prey.

Amongst the many friends who trusted Joseph de Maistre and whom he esteemed and trusted in turn was the worthy and religious Madame Huber d'Allion, who died at Lausanne somewhere about the time we are now speaking of. The learned author of the "Considerations" was exceedingly grieved on hearing of the death of this respected christian lady, and he whose mission would appear to have been to assail and overthrow the Voltairian philosophy of the period, could so far depart from the crushing logic and playful sarcasm to which he had been accustomed, as to go in for the following exquisitely soft and tender piece of portrait painting. "You cannot fancy" he says in one of his letters "how present the poor woman is to my mind's eye, I see her constantly before me with her tall straight figure, her Genevese primness, her calm reason, her natural finesse and grave pleasantry. I shall never pass such evenings again, as I have spent at her house—my feet on the fender, my elbow on the table, thinking, talking and skimming over a thousand subjects She is gone! and I will not be likely to see her replaced. When one has passed the middle of life (and I dare say I have passed it by this) such losses are irreparable. Separated for ever from all I love, I learn the death of my old friends, the young will one day learn mine. In truth I died in 1798, and the funeral is only put off. These lugubrious fancies form no contrast to public events which are far from being rose-coloured in this year of grace 1807. Some few thankless foreigners may be like yourself *sadly-Russian*, but as for me I am *Russianly sad.*" The state

of things in France immediately before and after the coronation of the First Napoleon was the constant subject of his thoughts and conversation, and notwithstanding his distance from the scene of action, "relegated at one of the poles," as he himself used to put it, his judgments on what was passing were amazing in their accuracy:—perhaps, after all, his great distance from France may not have been such an obstacle to him as we, at first sight, may be disposed to imagine. One of his own favorite sayings was "that the eye does not see what touches it" and it may be that from his remote point of observation Joseph de Maistre appreciated better the political complexion of things in France than if he had been struggling in the crowd. His faith never wavered in the downfall of the Buonaparte dynasty, and in the return to power of the banished Bourbons. "I have good reason to believe that the mission of Bounaparte is to restore monarchy, after which restoration he and his race will in due course disappear—as to the exact time, it would be bold to hazard a conjecture—every wise man should say "Nescio diem neque horam." Successful military adventurers like Napoleon and Cromwell have never yet founded lasting dynasties—royal families, like others, are sometimes worn out, but when that happens their places are not to be filled by private individuals—"I say that such families do not last, and that is all I say." Among the various projects that occupied his active mind at this time was that of going to Paris to see the lately crowned Emperor and plead in person the cause of his dispossessed sovereign. Although he disliked Buonaparte, he did not fear him, and he feared him less as King than he did as Conqueror; Buonaparte as sovereign must, of necessity, try to stifle that revolutionary spirit which, when a mere soldier he felt it his interest to develop and stimulate. Joseph de Maistre, taking it for granted that Napoleon knew men too well to treat badly one of the first scholars in Europe, placed his services at the disposal of Charles

Amadeus; unfortunately, the treaty of Paris, by which Savoy was annexed to France (not as the world since knows for the last time) put out of the question the possibility of carrying on, in favor of the king of Sardinia, anything like successful negotiations. The great royalist writer was now convinced that he must resign himself to a protracted stay in Russia, for there was little in southern or western Europe to draw him to either. The Jesuit Fathers, who, for some years before this, had been established in St. Petersburg, were now ordered to leave—rightly, or otherwise, they were accused of bringing about a great religious change which was daily taking place in some of the highest circles of Russian society. M. de Maistre's well known talents as a controversialist, his unbounded zeal for the interests of the church, and extraordinary regard for the Jesuits, soon brought him into difficulties. He was called to an interview with the Emperor, and although he succeeded in clearing his character and his honor from several of the charges preferred against him, he was not, after this time, as high in favor with Alexander as before. "It is well" he writes "that in a country like Russia, there should be no cloud between the sovereign and a foreign minister, but, whilst not interfering with any member of the Greek church, I am bound to say that if any one should consult me in religious matters, I would, as a devoted son of the Catholic church, regard myself as under an obligation to tell the whole truth." His old preceptors, the Jesuits, to whom he owed it, "that he was not an orator of the constituent assembly," had left St. Petersburg towards the end of the year 1816, by order of Prince Galitzin, Minister of public worship, and Joseph de Maistre did not wish to remain after them. He wrote to Turin asking for his recall, and was soon enabled to get a passage to Calais on board a Russian ship of war, which was under orders to bring home a portion of the Russian army of occupation in France. He arrived at Paris on the 24th June 1817 and pro-

ceeded immediately to visit his native mountains after an absence of over twenty years. One of his first cares after his return to Turin, where the treaties of 1815 permitted himself and his sovereign to renew their official acquaintance, was to prepare for publication the following remarkable works, "Du Pape" "De L'Eglise Gallicane" and "Les Soirées de St. Petersburg":—they were published at Paris, the first in 1819, and the other two in 1821. "Some years have elapsed," he says in his very learned preface to "Du Pape," "since I considered the state of France, and unless I am totally blinded by an honourable ambition of serving her, I rather think my services then were not wholly unacceptable—circumstances have no doubt changed since 1796—then each man was free to attack the *brigands*, as I may well call them, however, to-day that all the constituted authorities are in their proper places a writer should be continually on his guard, lest there may happen to him the misfortune which befel Diomede under the walls of Troy, namely that of wounding a divinity when pursuing an enemy. I am convinced, and I wish with all my heart to convince others, that without the sovereign Pontiff there is no true christianity, and that no honourable christian, separated from him, could draw up (if the man should be possessed of any real knowledge) a profession of faith clearly defined. The first lines of my book then tell what it is, and if anyone is in dread of being shocked at its doctrines, I beg of him to lay it instantly aside." There is no one who has ever read carefully this great treatise, that has not considered it a masterpiece of controversial scholarship;—for a man of the world to enter the theological arena against the eagle of Meaux, no small amount of pluck and erudition was necessary, and yet, Joseph de Maistre approaches the task with equal boldness and success,—I am fully aware that polemics, like politics and piety, should be avoided *here*—this is, as it should be, neutral ground upon which neither the angry politician nor the crazy conversialist has any right to tread;—

"There is no health, physicians say that we
Have nothing better than *neutrality*."

And, gentlemen, as far as the members of your invaluable society are concerned, I perfectly agree with the physicians—still, I must, subject of course to your approval, Mr. Chairman, touch lightly on religious ground, as I am drawn thither by the honoured subject of our lecture. The Count de Maistre loved and defended order, and because he loved it with an unquenchable love, and defended it with unrivalled power, therefore did he love and defend the Papacy: he willed the end, therefore did he will and extol the means. "Without the sovereign Pontiff in the world" he wrote at a time when the power of the Holy See was, as in our own time, reviled and supposed to be humbled, "the whole superstructure of christianity would soon be sapped and undermined, and to crumble to pieces, would only require the development of a few agencies, which would very soon be brought into play." The Pope is considered by our great writer under four relationships: —

1°:—he is considered dans sou rapport with the Catholic Church.

2°:—he is considered in his relations with temporal sovereigns.

3°:—he is considered in his relations with the interests of civilization, and lastly:—

He is considered in the relationship which he holds towards the separated churches.

Under each one of those heads Joseph de Maistre masses together such an amount of scriptural, patristic, and scholastic learning, as that any one reading him is fairly amazed how "un homme qui n'etait pas prêtre," as he describes himself, could ever have mastered, as he did, the whole range of theological science. In his opening chapters on infallibility and the councils, so much admired for their vigour and perspicuity, he anticipates and demolishes with unsparing hand almost every possible objection against the infallibility of the sovereign

Pontiff, when defining, as Pastor Supremus, freely and ex-cathedra what are the doctrines scriptæ et traditæ of the universal church. "Let religious supremacy once descend from the successors of St. Peter and it will go to the Patriarchs, as at Constantinople, it will go from them to the Synod as in St. Petersburg, it will next go to the Bishops, as in the episcopal churches of the new countries, and finally it will go to the State, as is the case in England;"—"once admit" exclaims this great catholic writer "that there is an appeal from the decrees of the sovereign Pontiff, and there is no longer government, no longer unity, no longer a visible church" and, then with his usual playfulness, and roguery, he must contrive to put even two great men in an uncomcomfortable position:—"If theologians of the *first* order" he archly suggests "such, for instance, as Bossuet and Fleury, kept these self-evident principles before their minds, they would never have permitted laymen of common sense to be laughing at them." His long residence in Russia, and thorough acquaintance with the religious situation in that (some 60 years ago) almost unkown country, enabled the Count de Maistre to bring to the relief of the catholic cause most valuable evidence from the liturgy and traditions of the Russo-schismatic church:—with his singular power of acquiring knowledge, Joseph de Maistre was not long in Russia when he knew the Sclavonic language, almost as well as he knew French, certainly as well as he knew any other (excepting French) of the five or six European languages with which he was acquainted. Whether it is the Akaphisti Sedmitchni, a volume containing the prayers ordained by the Holy Synod, and printed at Mohileff so early as 1698, or the (Mineia Mesatchnaja) the Lives of the Saints for each month of the Russian year, or (The Trio Postinaia) the Lenten Ritual, or (the Sobornic) which he found at Moscow, and which is a *recueil*, or collection of homilies and epistles, by the Fathers of the eastern church, from which he quotes, he heaps testi-

mony upon testimony in support of the supremacy in jurisdiction and dignity of the Bishop of Rome—after telling how the emperor Basil in 1019 sent ambassadors from Constantinople to Pope John XX. to obtain from him in favor of the then patriarch of Constintinople, the title of Œcumenical Patriarch of the East, as the Pope was Patriarch over the whole earth, De Maistre dismisses the question of Russian evidence by stating with as much point as truth, that, the Greeks were sure always to recognize the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff, when they wanted a favor, and whenever they became rebels, it was, simply, because the favors they asked were not granted them. Every one, who read "du Pape," must have fastened on the adroitness with which the scales were turned against a school of theologians, headed by the famous Natalis Alexander, who supported the infallibility, rather (according to them) the *indefectability* of the *See*, and refused it to the *person* or occupant:—De Maistre getting tired of hearing them continually repeat *the Holy See*, whilst they never mentioned the sovereign Pontiff, at length, made up his mind to hit them hard:—"Why gentlemen," he says in substance, you remind me very much of the *realists* of the 12th century—they were a lot of well-meaning people who supported the objective existence of universal ideas—they embroiled the literary world in those days by asking the question, was it *man* or *mankind*, that studies logic with us at the university, and that is daily in the habit of giving presents and receiving them- now, the difference between you, gentlemen, and your friends, the *realists*, is this (and it is to your disadvantage) that whilst they believed that mankind *really* read logic, they held that man, the individual A, or B, or C read logics too:—in other words, whilst they believed that in zoology there was such an entity as an *elephant* in the *abstract*, they would never think of going to his establishment for ivory—you, *realist* theologians, have much more effrontory, you admit the

sovereignty of a dynasty, and when you have done that much by way of concession, you tell us that *no* member of the dynasty is sovereign." After exhausting the subject of infallibility de Maistre concludes the first part of his great treatise by an exquisite and most conclusive chapter on the use of the latin tongue throughout the western church. As the deportment, dress and language of a wise man bespeak his character, so, too, is the unchangeableness of the church shown in her outward appearance—she speaks everywhere to the faithful in the same language, and this is so, only because particular churches have listened to the voice, and accepted the legislation of the sovereign Pontiff. Trajan wished, as the last of his conquests, that the language of victorious Rome would be carried to the banks of the Euphrates, but, what was refused to the haughty ruler of imperial Rome, was granted and more than granted to Christ's Vicar upon earth, at whose bidding the soldiers of the cross have carried the latin language to the remotest regions of both hemispheres. That, which from the beginning was the language of the Roman conquerors, was never more truly so, than when spoken by the missionaries of the Roman church—and, as it was the language of conquest, so was it equally the language of civilization. Whatever was venerable in Europe had its history and traditions written in latin—medals and trophies, tombs and annals, laws and canons spoke (if the expression will be allowed me) no other than the language of Cæsar and Cicero, which alone of the dead languages has again come to life, which is heard from pole to pole, and will not die, until that supreme voice, to which it owes its resurrection, shall be heard no more upon earth. In the second section of his work "du Pape," de Maistre treats anew the question of sovereignty, and, with his wonted extraordinary ability, justifies the power exerted by the Pope during the period that elapsed between the 11th and 16th centuries—but, it is in the 3rd and fourth sections that he employs with most suc-

cess his vast knowledge in defending the authority, privileges and usefulness of the primacy of St. Peter. He argues the case of Catholic *versus* Protestant missions with great warmth, and whether it is Dr. Buchanan, the anglican, or Voltaire himself, that comes in his way, he makes very short work of both and their objections,—one of his stories in winding up the case of the catholic apostleship is worth telling:—When the British Minister of the day sent Lord Macartney to China on an embassy, which forms a sufficiently curious chapter in the history of English diplomacy in the East, his Britannic Majesty thought it well to secure some Propaganda students, who, in a short time, would be likely to understand and speak the Chinese language. Cardinal Borgia, then at the head of the Propaganda, entered immediately into the views of the English foreign office, and recommended a certain number of students, who, in due time, accompanied the English ambassador to Pekin—on his arrival Lord Macartney, altho' a staunch protestant, pleaded the case of the catholic missions with great earnestness before the minister of state; the Oriental listened with great attention, and when Lord Macartney thro' his interpreter, had finished, the mandarin (as you will say) very pertinently replied, that the Emperor, his master, would think it a very extraordinary thing, that the English, in the very heart of Asia, should seek encouragement and protection for a religion, which their fathers had disavowed and rejected at home. In the concluding portion of his work he investigates after a most searching manner the nature, history and results of schism. One of his principles was that "every church that *is not* catholic *is* protestant" The distinction between schismatic and heretical churches ne vaut rien, is worth nothing. Every christian who rejects communion with the Holy Father is either protestant, or will be so. He *protests*, at all events, and whether he *protests* against one catholic truth or many, in as much as he protests, he is and should be regarded as protestant. De Maistre insists over and

over again on the impossibility of giving to the separated churches any common name which is indicative of unity, there is only one name which is applicable to all and under which, as a generic term, all may be classed, and that is "protestant" which is a negative term, not telling what they are, but telling what they are not. Two years after the publication of "Du Pape," (to which it was intended as a sequel) appeared "De L'Eglise Gallicane dans son rapport avoe le Souverain Pontife." It was written immediately before Joseph de Maistre left St. Petersburg, but was not published until 1821. It was in this learned treatise that he published his notions on jansenism, and its abettors in France of the school of Port Royal. To the literature of this sect, and to the Calvanistic spirit which characterized the legislative proceedings of the parliaments of Paris and Toulouse did he attribute the growth of that Gallican theology of which Gibbon once said, that "placed between the orthodoxy of Rome and the heterodoxy of Protestantism it received in turn the blows of both." The famous definition of calvanism given by the protestant Jortin is applied by de Maistre to the system of Jansenius:—"it is" said he "a religious system consisting of creatures without liberty, doctrines without sense, faith without reason, and a god without mercy." How such a school of opinion could have ever secured so many partisans in France, and given such trouble to church and state is answered by this explanation amongst others, "that the human heart is of itself revolutionary, and once the standard of rebellion is raised against authority, it will not be hard for the leaders of the opposition to find recruits—"Non serviam"—is as true of our days as of the time of the prophet Jeremy (chap. 2. v. 20) History scarcely tells of any such association as that which, under the guidance of Pascal and Arnauld, wrote, and prayed and protested within the gloomy walls of Port-Royal-des-champs. Ministers

magistrates, *savants*, all, as a matter of course, enemies of the Holy See, gathered together from time to time within this enclosure of revolt, and by shedding tears, making complaints, uttering calumnies, fomenting intrigues, printing books, and carrying on a correspondence of, by no means, a charitable character, they succeeded, as they ought to succeed, in causing the church of France to grieve, in braving the sovereign Pontiff, and in disquieting the proud spirit of even the "grand monarque." De Maistre says, it is quite a mistake to thank Port Royal for the genius of Pascal, or the learning of Arnauld. Port Royal was not an institution, it was a theological club, and nothing more, and you may, with as much justice, thank the Café francais for the wit of those who frequent it, as Port Royal for the truths discovered in connection with the cycloid, or the great work on the "perpetuity of faith" in the catholic church touching the sacrament of the Eucharist. De Maistre whilst giving Pascal all the praise to which, because of his vast intellectual powers, he was so justly entitled, meanwhile, was far from thinking "that in no country, and at no time was a more magnificent genius ever known than Blaise Pascal." The name of Pascal was for the jansenist party a tower of strength, no doubt, but there is scarcely anything less just than to believe Pascal to have been a great theologian—He was as the world knows, a geometer of the very first rank, he was, by his very nature, and as it were mathematical severity of thought, intended to be the head of a great philosophical school, but of theological science, he could not have known as much as would have made him a guide for every one else. A contemporary, remarkable alike for his erudition and conscientiousness, I mean the Baron Von Leibnitz said of Pascal :—"he never studied history, nor jurisprudence, and meanwhile one and the other are necessary for those who wish to establish some of the great christian truths." I have often thought myself

that Joseph de Maistre was not sufficiently well-informed, when in one peculiar instance he passed a somewhat severe judgment on Pascal. Pascal is, on his own side, in genius, the greatest man that France ever produced—I mean, by *his own side*, the party which went, afterwards, even beyond the *termini* that separate orthodoxy from heterodoxy. If Blaise Pascal was not an accurate and learned theologian, he was certainly an extraordinary thinker—every one who read Pascal's life by his sister Mdme. Périer knows, how, at the age of twelve, he surprised his father by working out on the pavement, where he used to play, a proposition that corresponded to the thirty-second of the first book of Euclid. At the age of sixteen, he composed a little treatise on the conic sections, which whilst it excited the admiration of Descartes made him doubt the authorship, and de Maistre says distinctly that Descartes had very good reason for so doubting. At nineteen, Pascal invented his celebrated arithmetical machine, and at the age of twenty six, by his experiments in the physical sciences, he found himself associated with the first philosophers of the age. It was not alone in mathematics that the originality and inventiveness of Pascal were extraordinarily great, in his moral considerations, too, though he is not, unhappily, deferential to authority, there is a peculiar depth, subtlety, and brilliancy. The great experiment of Pascal's life was that by which on the Puy-de-dôme, he set at rest for ever the cause of the suspension of the mercury in the barometrical tube. Pascal was charged with appropriating the previous experiments of Toricelli, by which he was led to his great discovery, and Joseph de Maistre does not see that this charge should never have been made. In his "nouvelles experiences" which Joseph de Maistre could not possibly have seen Pascal distinctly says that he did not only not claim, but he had energetically disclaimed, all credit for the experiments in question, and whatever honor attached to them belonged to

Toricelli, and not to himself. Whilst rendering to Pascal the full measure of praise, to which, because of his great scientific attainments he was entitled, de Maistre refuses to recognize the force or truth of the exaggerated language in which Pascal is so often spoken of. There were two circumstances which mainly contributed to cause people to put a high value on the "lettres provinciales";—in the first place, they were the only respectable French prose that had, up to their own time, appeared; and secondly they were written against the Jesuits. If it were against the capuchins or oratorians that these letters were directed, the chances are they would be scarcely spoken of now-a-days, and the great repute in which they were held, and which from their *bad faith* they never deserved, would have been long since entirely denied them. The legislation of the provincial parliaments the writings of Port Royal, the obsequiousness of certain bishops, the affair of the regale, the declaration of 1682, the character of Louis XIV, are all handled by de Maistre in his "de L'Eglise Gallicane" after that masterly manner which suggests the question so often to the reader, whether it is wit, or eloquence, or argument, that predominates during the course of those remarkable pages. From many causes the principal of which have just been named, there sprung a system, known as gallicanism, now happily for the peace of the church, fully and finally condemned, and which was described, as follows, by one who was never known to exaggerate or under state the truth;—writing of gallicanism in one of the piêces justificatives found in his history, the amiable and saintly Fenelon said:—"the fact is, that in France the king is practically, more the head of the church than the Pope:—*liberties* they are called—it is only true to say, that these *liberties* with regard to the Pope mean *slavery to the king*. From the king authority over the church goes to the lay judges, and the judges are not slow in ruling the bishops."

It was in the October of the year 1822, that also appeared the "Soirees de St. Petersburgh," a work, which if Joseph de Maistre had written no other, would have caused his name to live amongst the greatest of French writers—immediately before the publication of the "Soirees," it was revised by the celebrated de La Mennais, the immortal author having died of a slow paralysis on the 26th of the preceeding February. The "imprimatur" of such a man as the writer of the "Essai sur l'indifference dans la matiére de la religion" was enough to recommend the new publication to every philosophic reader. I have not been able to find out whether de Maistre and that truly wonderful, but! alas, unfortunate man were, at any time, personally acquainted :—certain it is, however, that in the opinions of both men (before, of course, de La Mennais' fall), in their unswerving belief in the superintending power of God, in the religious earnestness of their convictions touching the future interests of the church and of France, there was a great deal of what was exceedingly alike. "Europe" wrote Felix de La Mennais, whilst yet the church of France gloried in his genuis, "is running headlong in the direction of revolution. Nothing is fixed, nothing secure, conturbatæ sunt gentes, et inclinata sunt regna—Psal. xlv. 7. We are, I fear, only in the beginning of our troubles—Catholics will be called on to make still greater sacrifices for truth and conscience-sake—Oh! may they (whilst always subject to the justly constituted authorities) never bend to the tyranny of faction, and may they be ready to die for the truth rather than renounce that holy liberty which Christ purchased with his blood—such, at all events, is our prayer—we pray for order and for peace, and peace and order can only be found in presence of christian justice and christian right." In de LaMennais' work "Sur le progrés de la Revolution," which was printed in 1829, and which, at the time, attracted considerable attention,

there is shown the very same necessity for the presence of the christian influence in governments, as we have more than once seen insisted on during the course of our criticism on the "CONSIDERATIONS" of our author. "Such need" says de LaMennais "have nations of the power and liberty that come from God, that if they look for one or the other outside the christian church, they will sooner or later be forced to admit that she alone on earth furnishes us with the source of right and duty, she is the guide of those who command, she is the protection of those who obey, she is in a word the principle itself of moral order and existence. Written by Joseph de Maistre, revised by Felix de La Mennais it was not wonderful that the Soirées would be eagerly read—it was not every day that the catholic public would be treated to such a luxury in literature, as that with which they were now presented. The "Soirées de St. Petersburg" consisted of a series of dialogues, metaphysical and moral, which put in another shape some of those principles of government upon which de Maistre had those already insisted. In no other of his works has our immortal author succeeded better in uniting masculine strength with grace and sweetness than he has done in the famous "entretiens sur le government temporel de la providence"—all the flexibility of which he was so great a master is here brought into play, and even though a severe critic may sometimes object to certain pleasantries, and to the manner in which certain truths are brought forward he will still confess that apart from a few mistakes which no more affect the whole than the unevenness of the rind does the interior of an orange, there are few works in any language, few certainly, in French, which contain more of elevated thought, and superior beauty of style than do the Soirées de St. Petersburg. I fear I must have fatigued you by this time, seeing that I have dwelt so long on subjects known to you before, and which only found freshness and novelty inasmuch

as they were connected with a great and illustrious name. But the truth is, I have myself so much admired Joseph de Maistre's originality and prodigious erudition that I must be pardoned if I be more exacting on your patience than I ought to be. It was Lord Macauly who wrote at one time the following words, which however are far from being a transcript of gospel truth " the enthusiast misrepresents facts with all the effrontery of an advocate, and confounds right and wrong with the dexterity of a jesuit—and all this that a man who was in his grave for many years may have a better character than he deserves."—These would be hard words if I were an enthusiast, but, as an enthusiast is defined by Jeremy Taylor to be " one who has the zeal of credulity" and as I have not yet reached that degree of blind admiration, I congratulate myself on having escaped the literary excommunication of the great critic of the "Edinburgh." To attempt a criticism on the works of Joseph de Maistre, and pass by unnoticed his " *Soirees*" and " *Lettres* to a Russian gentleman on the Spanish Inquisition" would, surely, not be doing justice to the immortal author of both. I do not undertake to say that the " Soirées de St. Petersburg" is a work superior in merit to Du Pape.—In *Du Pape* Joseph De Maistre has before him only one truth, which he considers from different points of view, and developes with all the power and eloquence of which he is so complete a master:—in the " Soirées de St. Petersburg," he takes to himself a wider field ; he considers man in his relationship with God under almost every possible aspect. He seeks to reconcile man's free will with the divine *præscientia*, he investigates and accounts for the presence in the world of good and evil:—these are some of the questions which he undertakes to solve, and truly may it be said that in no one else did the grovelling philosophy of the eigthteenth century meet with a more formidable antaganist. He continues to discuss through the course of

his eleven "entretiens" or dialogues with Monsieur Le Senateur T. and Chevalier B. every question that turns up in a way that the *philosophers* là bas never dreamt of. He has at his disposal arms of every kind for their discomfiture, sometimes it is the cry of angry indignation, sometimes it is the withering smile of thorough and merciless contempt, sometimes it is the scorching sarcasm that he employs against them, at other times it is to the faultless syllogism that he appeals, whilst, at all times, there is underlying his whole process of offence and defence, the wisdom of the statesman, with the faith and hope of the sincere christian. The flexibility of his genius is shown in every dialogue of this profound, but really charming work—the man who can write of war with sternness and sublimity can be melting in his tenderness when he treats of prayer—"the destroying angel as the sun" he writes "goes round and round this globe of ours, and gives breathing time to one nation only that he may strike down the other. For when the measure of a nation's sins is filled up, the angel must press on unceasingly in his indefatigable flight—like to the lighted torch which you whirl round with rapidity, the rapidity of his movement makes him omnipresent at every point of his terrible orbit. He strikes at the same moment the erring nations, and seems to superintend the carnage as the duly appointed and inflexible minister of vengeance. And think not, that the populations which have fallen away from justice can escape or cut short this fearful judgment. The "grands coupables," the leading sinners must have filled up to the brim the chalice of expiation, before their offspring will be allowed to tell of the desolating wars that were brought about by the sins of their fathers." War is then he argues, a law of the world, and because it is such it comes from God, and it is not only divine in the source whence it comes, but it is also divine in its results. Who would dare to say that many

who die in war are not, by the very fact, privileged, and who would believe that the victims of this mysterious law have all shed their blood in vain? When Joseph de Maistre wrote these striking passages, he was surveying from the banks of the Neva the wasted fields and burned cities of central and eastern Europe—he had before his mind the horrors of the retreat of 1812. and with the light of the Kremlin, which he saw in imagination from the new capital of all the Russias, it was not difficult for the great christian philosopher to behold the chastening hand of God punishing France and Europe for the sins which reached their culminating point in the horrors of the revolution. Had the Count de Maistre been alive in our time, and witnessed the mighty changes, which it has taken only a few months to accomplish; had beheld the dreadful humiliation to which the proudest of European nations has been so unexpectedly subjected, had he beheld the unceremonious and ruthless way in which the oldest dynasty in the world has been lately overthrown, and had he studied in their causes and results the unholy agencies that were employed to bring about an issue at variance with the first principles of even the pagan morality of Greece or Rome, had *he* the great christian philosopher and political prophet of our century witnessed all this, he would have raised his hands to heaven, and in faith and resignation would have exclaimed;—to thee, O Lord, do I return thanks for the things that I have seen, in thy ways and in thy works, thou, indeed, art wonderful—in the humiliation which has befallen that country, which of all others I loved so well, do I discern proofs of thy *retributive* and chastening power, and in the passing dangers and difficulties that have encompassed thy representative on earth, I can see that a new occasion is presented for the exercise of that spirit of endurance and firmness which is inseparable from the church, and which, in due time, will enable her to arise from the conflict

upon which she has been forced to enter in the fulness of renovated health, and vigour. Few are there to day, who would measure as would the philosophic de Maistre, the length and depth of one of the greatest collapses which we read of in the history of nations. A favourite principle of his was this, that when the right of imposing obligation is denied, power becomes brute force, and obedience becomes slavery. Christian people, whether they aspire to intellectual, social or political success must recognize the presence and force of the divine guidance and traditions, which bind society together, and without which men soon become isolated and sacrifice to individual gain and individual passion what belongs to the nation at large. In the present state of the world, there is, unhappily, scarcely anything more noticeable than the absence of the religious element in all the public transactions of kings and statesmen—it is the law of physical force and passion that everywhere holds sway—no title, however sacred and ancient, is proof against the false political teaching and practices of the present age. The venerable traditions, which, in the good old catholic times, were so useful for the protection of Europe against the lawless spirit of barbaric conquest, have all disappeared, and the morality of courts and courtiers, of sovereigns and soldiers is regulated by no principle of justice or morality of which honest men can have the smallest conception. Joseph de Maistre held consistently thro' life that it is with political, as it is with social morality, once you throw religion over board you will have nought left but disappointment, disaster and defeat. This primary truth upon which our learned author insisted with as much energy as logic in his "Considerations," he developed still further at a later period of his life in a treatise, entitled an "Essay on the creative principle in political constitutions."—He found in the words of Proverbs "Per me reges regnant' a key to his whole system—this to

the mind of Joseph de Maistre was no mere ecclesiastical phrase, no pulpit metaphor, but was a literal, simple and palpable truth. It is not for men but for God to make or unmake sovereigns—the most man can do is to serve as an instrument in the dispossessing of princes, and in handing over the states of the dispossessed sovereigns to some others who were or were not princes—if they were not already princes, they cannot found a new dynasty "for" according to de Maistre, "there never yet existed for any lengthened period a ruling family the founder of which was plebeian." This rather novel position may at first seem opposed to historical evidence, but de Maistre boldly challenges his readers to gainsay the fact—the carlovingians were replaced by Hugh Capet, but Hugh Capet was duke of Paris, first peer of France, and his origin was lost in the night of ages. The Stuarts were expelled, no doubt, but expelled by a *Prince*, and their blood remained on the throne, for Queen Anne was a Stuart. Look, however, at the history of the first Napoleon, and recollect what was the end of that extraordinary man whose power, at one time, was supposed to be so far consolidated as to secure for him and his race a predominance in Europe—and the possibility of a long tenure of power by the dynasty which the coup d'etat of 1851 restored to France is not likely to be secured by the recent change of residence on the part of a distinguished personage from St.Cloud to Wilhelmshohe. Why did not the son of Napoleon I. succeed to the empire? Why did not Richard Cromwell succeed to the protectorate? People account for the first result by saying that the king of Rome died prematurely, and that even in the event of his having lived to a mature age the allies, who sent his father to St. Helena, would not permit him to take up his residence at the Tuilleries, and they account for the second result by saying that Richard Cromwell unhappily had not the genius of the merciless Oliver, all of which simply

amounts to this that *these families would be still reigning if they had not ceased to reign.*

In dealing with the vast problems touching the foundation of the social edifice, and the transmission of the civil power, Joseph de Maistre is substantially in accord with the teaching of our great catholic doctors from Bellarmine to Billuart, and from Billuart to Balmez and Montalembert. He certainly seems here and there throughout his "essay on the creative principle in government" to be more of an obsolutist than Bellarmine whose fundamental principle was expressed in these words "it is certain that public authority comes from God, from whom emanates all that is good and lawful—it resides *immediately* in the multitude and this by divine right, and as divine right has not given this power to any one in particular (for positive law being taken away, there is no reason why one man would rule rather than another among a number of *equal* men) it is the multitude that will give power to the sovereign, not the sovereign who will give power to the multitude. According to this teaching society has a perfect right to establish the form of government which it thinks best for its peculiar wants, and by counsel and election to transfer to an individual, whether king or consul, the authority and jurisdiction which a while ago was vested in itself. Between political power and ecclesiastical power there is, however, a difference, which must be borne in mind, that political power is given by divine law to the multitude, and, therefore *indirectly* as far as divine law is concerned and directly by the law of nations to the chief magistrate, for the law of nations is nothing more than series of conclusions drawn by mere human reason from the natural law, and one of these conclusions recognizes and recommends *election* as a means of deciding the question of superiority,—ecclesiastical power comes entirely by divine law, and the subject who receives it, receives it immediately from God. This doctrine touching the trans-

mission of the civil power was not the doctrine solely of the illustrious Cardinal Bellarmine, but has been adopted by most catholic writers since his time;—a Spanish theologian maintained against the pedantic James I. that power comes to princes *mediately* from God, and *immediately* from the people—the theologian in question was no other than the great father Francis Suarez of the university of Cóimbra. The catholic church is every day charged with every possible manner of guilt—at one time she is a tyrant, she teaches and practices tyranny, at another time she is a *slave* to the powers of the world, and tries to impose by her system her own slavishness upon her misguided followers—reviews, newspapers, speeches, sermons, *charges*, all tell us, that *Popery* is a fearful engine of mischief, only second in its destructiveness to infidelity, as we were told the other day by a dignitary of the church of England:—this right rev. prelate would very likely have made, if a choice were given him, much about the same reply to his correspondent that Johnson made to Boswell, when the latter asked him which of the two religions he would prefer "roman catholicism or presbyterianism," *Why sir of the two*, answered the grim old sage, I would prefer the popish," Returning to the question of government I will take occasion here to ask those who may misrepresent us, do they find in any of their own writers, in Hooke or Chillingworth, any more reasonable doctrine on the vexed question of sovereignty than such as I have introduced from Bellarmine and Suarez. Will they refuse to believe that man is unlike all other animals, and inasmuch as he is born destitute of many things that are of necessity for soul and body, he must appeal to society, that is, to the assistance of his fellow mortals—This society, which is indispensable to him cannot long exist without some directive power—God, who adapted him for society, and made society of necessity to him, must, too, have given a power to society in order to its

own control and government. Society supposes a multitude and in a multitude when all are alike in power, no one man is entitled, *jure proprio*, to step to the front and claim authority over the others—this authority must be given, and those to give it are clearly those who possess it, the multitude possess it and by election or other becoming way can delegate its power to many taken from several classes, and the form of government is called a democracy, it can delegate power to a few nobles, and the form of government is called an aristocracy, or to one man for himself only, or to one for himself and in trust for others, and this last form of government is called a hereditary monarchy. I said that M. de Maistre is *substantially* in accord with most catholic writers, when treating of the transmission of the civil power—he and they recognize the fact, that all legitimate power comes from God, and they only differ as to the manner in which it comes to the sovereign, or other justly constituted authorities. As the church has never pronounced judgment upon the matter, we are as free to hold the moderate opinion of Bellarmine and Suarez, as we are to hold the absolutist doctrine of de Maistre or de Bonald. The first seeds of revolt against the existence of divine authority in government were sown in Europe by the unsparing hand of Martin Luther, who in his book "de libertate christiana," told the peasants of Germany that a christian was subject to no one. At a later period the people of England were told by Thomas Hobbes (whose system prepared the way for that of Locke) that the force of all law rests upon *agreement*—Every kind of right as a consequence is derived from a pact or mutual convention and this pact he says was preceded by a state of nature, during the continuance of which men had a right to everything, and when in the words of the atheistic author of the "contrat social," "each one being united to the rest, nevertheless, obeyed only himself, and was as free after as before." The

obvious meaning of all this is that simply there is no difference between right and wrong, and that man left to himself without the unerring compass of christian faith must inevitably drift into a set of opinions which will reduce society to either slavery or anarchy. How different the sublime and consoling teaching of the christian philosopher—who, whilst he gives his spirit of enquiry sufficient scope, recognizes certain principles as unalterable, and rejects any consequences that are irreconcilable with these—He believes in God, and regards only as legitimate, the authority that is derived from him—he believes that the same God who is the author of nature is likewise the author of society, and that he imposed upon all, for the reason that all were formed by himself who could not be the author of disorder, the saving principle of obedience for conscience sake. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but from God,—and those that are, are ordained by God:—therefore, he, that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God (Epis. ad Rom. cap. xiii.). The power here spoken of is *legitimate* power, not the power of those who abuse *power*. The great Bossuet on this particular passage of St. Paul puts the case in this way:—"God takes under his protection all legitimate power, under whatsoever form established, and whoever undertakes to overturn such power is not only an enemy to public order, but is an enemy of God." Why, the truth is (and it is told to the shame and discredit of modern philosophy) that the ancient law-givers of Greece and Rome established their various systems of government on divine authority—in those times, politics and religion were not entirely separated, and it was not at all times easy to distinguish the legislator from the priest—and to be satisfied of this, I have only to invite you to read a book which I have no doubt you have got in the library of your society, Plutarch's life of Numa. "He would be a fool" says an unsuspected

writer of the last century "that would raise the question who gave a constitution and liberty to Sparta and Rome:—these republics did not receive the charters of their freedom from man, they received them from nature, that is to say, from God." In the religious institutions of Numa we find already laid the foundation of Roman jurisprudence and liberty, and to the worth of these institutions and their results is paid by the historian Livy, seven hundred years afterwards, this remarkable compliment:—"neque ambigitur quin Brutus idem, qui tantum gloriæ, superbo exacto rege, meruit, pessimo publico id facturus fuerit, si libertatis immatura cupidine priorum regum alicui regnum extorsisset" (Lib. II chap. I.). Why would Brutus have wrested sovereignty from any one of the former kings to the public detriment? is it for the reason given by Machiavelli:—"Uno populo uso a vivere sotto un principe se per qualche accidente diventa liberó con difficultá mantiene la liberta"—a people accustomed to live under a prince if by any accident they should become free will with difficulty preserve their liberty;—or is it, which is far more likely, that under former kings notwithstanding their diversity of tastes and the peculiar complexion of their several administrations, there was still to be met with a religious appreciation of the duties which they were bound to discharge in virtue of their kingly office. Nations have never been civilized but by religion—no other save the religious influence can make men truly civilized. For full three centuries, says Joseph de Maistre, Europe has had footing in America and what was given by her to the newly discovered continent but fire-arms and whiskey—fire-arms by which the Indian savage was able to kill others and fire-water by which he was enabled to kill himself. We, no doubt, took with us to America science and commerce, in a word, our civilization, such as it was, but, meanwhile we drove back to remote forests and hunting-grounds a race of men who were as much the victims of

our vices, as they were of our relentless superiority. How differently did the catholic church treat those unhappy savages—She sent her missionaries from one end of that vast continent to another to rescue men from misery by teaching them not only to know and serve God, but also to teach them agriculture and form them after the model of the most industrious and educated christian nations—Did the philosophers do as much as this ? not they—they would prefer to write books in Paris to show that the savage state was a natural state, in fact, an enviable state, and that the heroic men who taught astronomy in Paraguay painting in China, and music by the Hudson river had done vast damage to the prospects and happiness of the happiest of peoples. All—and I mean by all,—all rational men—who are subject to authority in whose legitimacy they believe and in whose wisdom, religiousness and justice, they have confidence, will not, as they ought not, look for change, merely for the sake of making an experiment, they will say, as did the old Roman of whom Dionysius Halicarnassus makes mention. "Nobis nova reipublicæ forma non est opus, nec a majoribus probatam et per manus traditam mutabimus," and it is because that his countrymen (as he may have called them) forgot themselves, because they forgot the presence of the divine principle and influence in government, because every Frenchman, following the advice of David Hume, took about in his pocket "the plan of a perfect republic" because, in a word, they forgot the ancient religious maxims of their country, maxims which Jerôme de Bignón said were written not on paper "mais es cœurs des français" it was because of all this that the immortal de Maistre came to the relief of what was thought to be the tottering christian edifice, and by his genius and his pleasantry literally shivered to atoms the fabric raised by men whose mission was, in the impious language of their chief "écraser l' infâme de chrétienté" I would not

do full justice to the great scholarship of Joseph de Maistre, if I did not here make allusion to his extraordinary knowledge of the ancient classics—although able to draw apposite illustrations from all, he seems to have had a particular fondness for Plato and Plutarch amongst the Greeks, as Cicero and Livy were clearly his favorites among the Latins—indeed, some of his critics thought he borrowed somewhat too much of argument and quotation from pagan sources, but, like a great many eminent scholars it was not improbable that he was oftentimes under the impression that truth in a dead language is doubly true—certain it is, that to these ancient models we are no doubt to attribute in great part that rare conciseness, clearness, and vigour for which Joseph de Maistre will ever hold among French writers a foremost, if not the very first, place. In his six letters to a Russian gentleman he disposes of the whole case of the Spanish inquisition in such a way, as that no one after reading him could with any show of reason venture upon retailing the old fashioned calumnies against the catholic church. Three capital errors have for centuries pre-occupied men's minds touching the Spanish Inquisition :—1st. It is believed to have been a purely ecclesiastical tribunal, 2nd, it is believed that the ecclesiastical judges who sat in the tribunal condemned to death, 3rd, it is believed that persons were condemned to death for simple opinions. Joseph de Maistre after denouncing the first opinion as false, the second as false, and the third as ridiculously false, shows the real facts of the case to be so plain, and yet so overwhelming, that the reader must rise from a perusal of those six letters amazed at the ignorance shown by most writers on the vexed question of the inquisition.—Voltaire, whom the illustrious Joseph de Maistre never spares, is in these letters turned into immense ridicule—the sneer and sarcasm which the unbelieving philosopher of Ferney flung at everything that christians deem sacred were both employed against

himself with literally crushing effect by the great subject of our lecture.—In his Jeanne d'Arc Voltaire in a moment of forgetfulness wrote of "Un tribunal qui egorge les mortels avec un fer sacré" de Maistre first reminds his readers that "un fer sacré" was stolen from Moliére's Tartufe, but of course, he archly suggests, "comedians have all things in common," and then he tells the impious author that in hating the inquisition he had shown his sense of discrimination for whatever other defects may have attached to that tribunal, if he, Voltaire, had come in its way it would have made very short work of him and his anti-christian productions. It would take me too long did I give to those letters even a part of the prominence which is their due but, it will be enough to say that they prove how true were the words spoken [illegible] before by the man who wrote them. "All great men [illegible] soldiers or statesmen, notwithstanding what their friends tell you, are and must be in a certain sense intolerant—as they should uphold every truth so should they by an equal obligation condemn what is opposed to it, and it is always an axiom in government that great errors which bring about political violence and insubordination are only to be met and prevented by means whilst they are not equally wrong are equally energetic. The other works of Joseph de Maistre best known abroad are his "examen" and refutation of the fundamental principles of the Baconian philosophy, his admired criticism on the letters of Madme Sevigné, his "Letters on public education in Russia," and his entertaining "Miscellanies" in which are found the "five famous paradoxes."—I said "best known abroad," for the truth is Joseph de Maistre is scarcely known at all in Ireland, certainly not known as he deserves. Chateaubriand who, with all his brilliancy, falls so far short of the matchless de Maistre, is known to the great majority of Irish readers: the "Genie du christianisme" is a book which every one has read whilst the inimitable

"Soirées de St. Petersburg" are almost as little known in our country as the treatise on alchemy by Avarroes of Cordova. To be sure the works of Joseph de Maistre are not to be found in english dress—"du Pape," as far as I know, being the only one of his books which has been translated into our language. If at first sight it seems a matter of regret that all his writings are not translated it is, in one sense, perhaps, a matter for congratulation that things are so;—Joseph de Maistre would be certain to lose by translation—it would be scarcely possible to do full justice in any translation to that racy, nervous, and masculine French in which the anti-christian doctrines of the 18th century are so pitilessly exposed and so completely refuted. You, gentlemen, at all events, cannot urge your ignorance of French as a reason why you cannot profit of the teachings of the greatest catholic writer of the first period of the present century. The successful studies, which, as I have been told, you have made in that language, now become so universal, ought to encourage you to read and read again the works of the immortal author upon whose life and writings I have so very unworthily undertaken to lecture. In an age like ours, when the bookstalls of every city, town and village in the land are overcrowded with cheap and mischievous books, when the poisonous literature of Paris and London is served up at 6d. a volume for the undermining of Irish faith and Irish virtue, when Dumas pére et fils would seek to get an entrée into respectable society, and Reynolds would aspire to guide our unselfish, generous and patriotic working classes, whilst this much is being done, it is your mission, gentlemen of the Cork Young Men's Society, first to see that you yourselves are instructed in the sciences which perfect the christian scholar, and by your example and your superior knowledge to be afterwards the means of edifying and instructing others, who have not been equally fortunate as yourselves. Bring to your aid and

to theirs not the opinions of men, who, in truth, have no opinion that you or I should think worth acceptance—no matter in what Johnsonian language their theories may be worked out, your touch-stone should be not classic english, but sound doctrine. We should not forget that there is more of what is hostile to catholic truth conveyed, through the medium of the english language, than through any other channel with which we are acquainted.—It is by excellence the language of heresy, and the language which of all others has shown itself most subservient to the infidels of Europe. There is no calumny however clumsy from Cracow to Quebec that our "leading journals" are not only too anxious to retail with note and comment, provided always that the Pope and the catholic church be the accused, and it matters little who is the accuser. We the children of the church have at this moment a great and sacred cause to cherish and defend—a cause that notwithstanding the elaborate machinery of misrepresentation that has been exerted against it in these countries, is still triumphing, and triumphing to such an extent as that its enemies are forced to admit their confusion. Whilst we witness with becoming pride the great things that have been effected for religion in our own country, we feel intensely, (and this after the example of the Apostle because our solicitude extends to all the churches) for the sufferings of our brethren abroad. As we are all members of the one mystic body, we share in the sorrows of all who suffer for "conscience sake" as we would have shared in their joys :—their sufferings are our sufferings, their happiness is our happiness, in the same way as their enemies are our enemies, and as those who defend them are equally the defenders of the cause we regard as our own. Let us then, keeping in mind the invaluable services which, in his own time, he rendered to the christian and catholic cause hold Joseph de Maistre in grateful remembrance;—his genius, his candour, his

wit, his eloquence, his orthodoxy are all worthy of admiration. In our days we have had few like him, indeed, it seems to me we have had no one like him. It is, no doubt, regrettable that so comprehensive a subject as the "life and writings of Joseph de Maistre" should have fallen into such unworthy hands as mine, but even though I have failed in many things, I trust, you, gentlemen, will give me credit for this much, that what I have said, I have said deliberately, and in good faith, and that whatever others may think of the illustrious Savoyard, who lies buried in the Jesuit church at Turin, you will believe me (however mistaken) sufficiently sincere in regarding him as probably the ablest, as certainly he was the most uncompromising catholic apologist of our century.